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## PRESS RELEASE

Alaska National Guard

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**April 15, 2014**

By Master Sgt. Cornelius Mingo  
168th Air Refueling Wing

### **168th Medical Group Guardsmen provide free dental services**

**EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska** — Members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 168th Medical Group participated in Alaska Mission of Mercy 2014 in Anchorage, as volunteers treated more than 1,500 patients April 12-13, estimating approximately \$200,000 in care.

The Mission of Mercy concept, originating in Virginia, has spread throughout the United States, and this is the first time the event has been hosted in Alaska. Volunteers donated their time, resources and unique skill-sets to provide free dental care according to the Alaska Mission of Mercy web page.

"At first, I was intrigued to experience the similarities and differences between our Air National Guard humanitarian missions and this event hosted by the Alaska Dental Society. But ultimately, I was really just excited to be able to help out my fellow Alaskans," said Staff Sgt. Vanessa Campbell, 168th Medical Group dental tech. "It was sobering to realize that there is a strong need for all dental services right here with our neighbors and community."

Alaska Mission of Mercy provided care for those in need for two days. Volunteers said an important element of the Alaska Mission of Mercy is patient education, which is the most cost-effective way to reduce oral disease. A program to help patients understand the importance of good daily oral hygiene practices, healthy diet and routine preventive dental care was an essential part of the care given. Patients learned about the negative effects of soda, sugary beverages, tobacco products, the link between dental health and overall health, oral cancer and more.

"When you pay it forward by holding the door open for someone, paying for their coffee or providing free medical services to someone in need, you are creating a domino effect and spreading goodwill and hope to others," said Senior Airman Kayla Kerstetter, 168th Medical Group dental technician. "I wanted to be a domino in the Mission of Mercy and be an advocate for serving others. As human beings, it's not only important for us to gain knowledge in what we are passionate about but, it's important for us to share that knowledge by volunteering our services to others."

The event was such a success that Alaska will host the program again in 2015 in Fairbanks.

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Photo cutlines follow

- 2 -

**Photo cutlines**

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Staff Sgt. Vanessa Campbell, 168th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group dental tech, and Senior Airman Kayla Kerstetter, 168th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group dental technician, outside the 168th MDG main entrance on Eielson AFB, AK. U.S. Air Guard photo by Master Sgt. Cornelius Mingo.

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Senior Airman Kayla Kerstetter, 168th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group dental technician, assists the dental radiology technician at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center during Alaska Mission of Mercy 2014. Photo courtesy: Staff Sgt. Vanessa Campbell.